

TOWN OF IPSWICH - MASSACHUSETTS
Ipswich Shellfish Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen
Tuesday January 5th, 2016

Meeting Minutes

A meeting of the Shellfish Advisory Committee to the Board of Selectmen was held on Tuesday, January 5, 2016 at 7:00 p.m. in room A of the Ipswich Town Hall. Members present were Chairperson Linda Alexson, Brenda Turner, David Swicker, Wayne Castonguay and Bill Craft. Also present were Shellfish Constable Scott LaPreste, Police Chief Paul Nikas, and Recording Secretary Marie Rodgers. Charles Surpitski and Michael Lambros were not present, with prior notice to the Chair.

Citizen's Queries: there were none.

Constable Report:

Constable LaPreste reported the last organized task took place in December at Patterson's Landing; trees were trimmed and crushed stone placed. Eleven permit holders did not perform a task this year.

The Ipswich River is currently open; winter rain rules are in effect as of December 15th. The Constable is keeping track of the number of applications in the Clerk's office; if the number exceeds eighteen, a lottery will be required. Chief Nikas said he received two hardship requests to be reviewed by the Constable.

Eagle Hill ramp repair is underway; DPW will do the work and Shellfish will pay for labor; it will be under \$700.

In response to Mr. Castonguay's inquiry, Constable indicated the oyster resource is good, the number of harvesters is down, many harvest the invasive oysters and they don't count toward the limit; there are no rules on the invasive oysters.

Constable reported that new Assistant Deputy 'Pick' Thistlewood has covered hundreds of tides since he's started working, and no more than a handful of days have passed without coverage.

Ipswich River Update

Since the last meeting, Constable reported, that not one test has taken place. Another meeting is pending with DPW, members of the SAB and the Consultant Kevin McHugh to review and generate a plan going forward; the goal is to find the 'smoking gun'. He would like to see individual areas tested more closely; next month he will have a summary from the meeting.

Mr. Craft initiated discussion regarding the severity of the pollution problem. Members responded; for the past five years, counts in the summer are significantly high but erratic, which makes it tricky to predict. Standards for shellfish is low compared to the standard for human health, high counts would stop clamming, but would not be a threat to swimming. Mr. Craft said he would report back to the Board of Selectmen.

Mr. Castonguay submitted a report titled IRWA Farley Brook Tracking Summary (hereby incorporated by reference) and reviewed the results showing a short term reprieve; clearly an intermittent problem and seemingly improving over time. Mr. Castonguay went on to caution, because the pollution is unpredictable, the State may close the river next year unless the pollution source is identified. Discussion ensued; Constable noted a new, stricter FDA agent was hired, he will review DMF data, results from testing the Ipswich River twice a month and other areas once a month.

New Grant Process

Ms. Alexson initiated a preliminary discussion; three areas are available for private aquaculture; the State may test in the spring, a lottery may take place in the fall.

Ms. Alexson posed the question: do we want more private grants?

Mr. Castonguay responded in favor; Ipswich has a viable aquaculture program, which is positive for the resource; there are no negative impacts, with the exception of impact on the staff. It would be a shame to stop after this committee has spent years developing regulations and recommended to continue.

Mr. Swicker responded in favor; he indicated that there's no harm in it, not like the past years, there's clams everywhere, although he suspected parking may become an issue and suggested alternative parking areas. Constable added that is the best thing about the 125 cap; the landing cannot handle 200-300 permit holders.

Ms. Turner argued against private aquaculture program, saying she has seen a big mess, no one tends to them, nets floating around and its dangerous, there are enough clams; no need for it.

Mr. Craft opined that it is a good investment for someone, who has the time, and responsible people should be encouraged to do it; he felt it would be good to continue to develop estuaries to the fullest extent possible.

Discussion took place regarding the process of determining flats suitable for private aquaculture. The committee has full control over it, then the state steps in to approve the committee's decision; there are a total of seven areas.

Ms. Alexson questioned the status of the current grants. Constable reported: out of the original seven, three are 3 active and one has unofficially rescinded. He explained the strong currents in the west branch of Fox Creek have caused difficulties and problems for all the grant holders.

Ms. Alexson clarified that once the grant is rescinded, the area reverts back to public use; Constable confirmed.

Ms. Alexson said the discussion will continue next month.

Enhancement Fund discussion

Constable submitted a document titled Ipswich Shellfish Permit Enhancement Fund Intent (hereby incorporated to these minutes by reference) members reviewed and commented. Ms. Alexson will incorporate the suggestions.

Mr. Craft initiated discussion regarding the issue of 'branding' the Ipswich clams without depuration; the term 'Ipswich Clam' is the term used for the whole belly clam; Ipswich clams are seen on menus in far corners of the US; pros and cons were pointed out; there is no standard and it is difficult to quantify control and checks on clams. Mr. Castonguay stated that there is only one place in the entire world, that can guarantee an "Ipswich Clam" and when they can't get them, they're not on the menu; the establishment resides in Ipswich.

Old Business

Ms. Alexson wrote a letter and will mail it to Alexis Pappas and Michael Trupiano at Ipswich Shellfish thanking them for their \$500 donation to purchase burlap bags for the green crab trapping program.

Mr. Castonguay submitted his draft letter, on behalf of the BOS to MDMF dated 1/5/2016 (hereby incorporated to these minutes by reference) urging support for the green crab eradication program; Mr. Craft agreed to submit it to the Board of Selectmen.

MOTION:

Mr. Swicker moved to recommend the BOS sign and send the letter. Mr. Castonguay seconded and the motion passed unanimously.

Approval of minutes:

Ms. Turner moved to approve the minutes from December 1, 2015 meeting as revised. Mr. Swicker seconded, the motion passed unanimously. (hereby incorporated by reference)

Next Meeting –Tuesday, February 2 @ 7:00 p.m. in Room A

It was moved, seconded and unanimously voted to adjourn at 8:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,
Marie Rodgers

These minutes were approved at the March 1, 2016 meeting.